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ABSTRACT

Examining the extent to which women were emerging as power actors in rural areas, data were collected from two rural communities (Prairie City at 4,400 and Center Town at 2,000 population) in 1962, 1973, and 1977. The hypotheses examined were: women community power actors will have fewer memberships in voluntary associations than men power actors; they will be as old or older than the men; they will have lived in the community as long or longer than the men; and they will have as high or higher levels of income and education than the men. Variables examined were age; education; income; length of residence; political orientation; memberships in voluntary groups; total mean power value in business, politics, and general affairs; and occupational prestige. Power actor identification involved interviewing external knowledgeables, internal knowledgeables, and the power actors themselves. The populations interviewed were small, ranging from interviews with 30 internal knowledgeables in 1977 to 2 female power actors in 1962. Results indicated: little change in selected personal characteristics; more memberships in voluntary associations among men; differentiation in the occupations held by men (business, agriculture, and education) and women (professional and technical) power actors; equivalent education among men and women; a mean age of 45-55; an increase in the number of women power actors (23.6% and 26.7% in 1973 and 1977); and emergence of 2 female role models--the resource model (employed outside the home and younger) and the good-companion model (housewives, older, and at the empty nest stage). (JC)

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WOMEN AS POWER ACTORS:

A NEW TREND IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

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INTRODUCTION*

In the areas of politics and public leadership and decision making, the assumption is that these domains are male domains. Consequently, both men and women seem to share the view that power, politics, and decision making are men's games. In review of the political role of women, Costantini and Craik (1972:222) conclude, "To one degree or another, women have tended to defer to the political judgment of men, in this country and elsewhere; sex roles have been so defined that politics is primarily the business of men."

Most reviews of women's roles find a low level of women's participation in current political arenas. The election record of women to public office at state and national levels as compared with men is astonishingly low. The employment and appointment of women to high administrative positions in government is virtually negligible. The concentration of women in nonsupervisory and nonpolitically relevant occupations (sex-typed) remains high and exceeds that of racial segregation (Krauss, 1974: 1708).

In general, not only has it been found that women are politically less participatory in elected positions, but other patterns of female political behavior vary significantly from male patterns of behavior. Yet, indicators exist to suggest that women in the future will be taking a more prominent role in power, politics, and decision making.

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Recent reviews of the political participation of women have uncovered some noteworthy changes that might be indicative of an increased participation of women in politics and decision making. Although it remains minimal, the number of women in state legislatures has increased by 18.8% from 1968 to 1972 (Lynn, 1975). In the general public, women have voted more than men in the past three presidential elections. Lynn (1975), on the basis of results from poll surveys, delineates several additional signs of change in the traditional attitudes concerning women and politics; for example, (1) a large block (40-45%) of American women favoring major changes in these traditional attitudes and status of women politically and (2) an increase of 12% from 1969 to 1971 in voters who would vote for a woman as a U.S. President. In addition to these specific data, key variables that are positively related to fuller political participation have been increasing. These include increases in women's labor-force participation rates, the number and percentage of women completing college, and a trend toward urbanization.

In a recent study of rural community power actors, a significant increase in the number of women identified as power actors was found. By the issue-specific reputational method, the power actors were identified in two rural midwestern communities in 1962 and again in these same communities, one in 1973 and the other in 1977. In one community, the number of women in the power actor pool increased by 16.2% (2 to 8), and in the other community, the increase was 26.7% (0 to 8) of the community power actor pool.

A gap in social science literature exists concerning the role of women in local government and political systems as authoritative decision makers (Karnig and Walter, 1976). In an early work, Bell, Hill and Wright (1961) noted the taken-for-granted assumption of women's absence from the community power structure. In a review of community power studies, they found that ". . . regardless of the size of the community studied--from metropolis to small town--women are seldom perceived as members of the local power elite" (Bell et al., 1961:43). When women were identified as power actors, they composed less than 15 percent of the power actor pool.

The presence or involvement of women in community issues, projects, or decisions is not a revolutionary happening (see Women's Foundation, 1945). Women have long been involved in community activities, but the change is in the interpretation of their involvement. The traditional, internalized social definition of women has been as inferior, powerless, and apolitical (Krauss, 1974; Henley and Freeman, 1975; Lofland, 1975). Therefore, they are perceived as present in community issues, but as irrelevant to the decision process.

Lofland (1975) describes this analytic attitude and portrayal of women by urban sociologists as the 'thereness' of women. The 'thereness' of women is examined as a consequence of community conceptualization problems and the problem focus created by criteria of funding sources and the sex of the researcher (i.e., predominantly male).

Community power studies also have been characterized by these phenomena. In addition, the covert assumption has been that power structures are male-dominated (Bell et al., 1961). Data-collection methods may be influenced

by this assumption in the formation of questions or issues selected for study.[1] Most studies have focused on the business, political, and economic structure, and this emphasis further assured the identification of male power structures.[2]

The purpose of this paper is to suggest theoretical explanations for the changes in the roles of women in rural community decision making. This will involve a comparison of the roles of politician and community power actor. The main focus will be an analysis of the personal and social characteristics of the power actors in two rural communities.

Researchers concerned with women in local and state political activities and various occupations seem to be searching for some harbinger of change of women's role in politics and public affairs. They have overlooked the role of women as power actors, which we conceptualize as the interface between women's traditional role of homemaker and community volunteer and the 'deviant' role of women as an elected political leader.

ROLE OF POLITICIAN VS. COMMUNITY POWER ACTOR

The role of women as community power actors is conceptualized as distinct from the role of women as politicians. Although much insight and understanding concerning the role of women as power actors will be derived from other female activities in the public sector (e.g., elective positions), the role is yet unique. In this study, the community power-actor role is considered as an extension of the traditional female role, in contrast to the politician role that is considered a deviant role.

Costantini and Craik (1972) view women's public involvement, in general, as an integral part of a broad social career rather than a means

to political office. Prejudice and antifeminist attitudes exist regarding women's political leadership. Lynn and Flora (1977:142) suggest that, "Men who succeed in politics generally receive positive reinforcement, while a woman may be 'punished' for leaving her home."

The process of becoming a power actor lacks the formality of recruitment to a political role. Recruitment to a political role entails some statement of intent. This seeking of office suggests a sense of competitiveness and desire for dominance that are not consistent with the traditional female sex role. Thus, becoming a candidate for an elective office is considered a deviant role behavior for women (Stoper, 1977; Costantini and Craik, 1972; Lynn and Flora, 1977). In a study concerning explanations for the absence of women in elective offices, Karnig and Walter (1976) found that the primary barrier was in formally seeking an office rather than the winning of an election.

To avoid the stigma of deviancy (as in politics), participation in community decision making might be a part of one's occupation and may follow the reduction of family obligations as with the increase in children's ages (Lynn and Flora, 1977). The constraints of household and family responsibilities and the strong negative attitudes toward neglect of them make local involvement more acceptable. Local, community involvement requires less role dispensibility, financial outlay, and mobility (Karnig and Walter, 1976). For example, women involved in school-bond issues and hospital annexes are not generally chastized for abandoning their children and family responsibilities as are women legislature representatives.

One reason for the greater competitiveness in politics is that the role of politician, in constrast to community power actor, may be more attractive to men. Political activities at the local level frequently are perceived as "stepping stones" or "proving grounds" to political careers with offices at state and national levels. Frequently, political activities are financially rewarding, whereas the community power actor generally engages in activities for gratis.

Researchers have found that women exhibit a different style of leadership and power. This style is compatible with local leadership. For example, women seem more favorably oriented toward nonpartisan activities (Costantini and Craik, 1972; Karnig and Walter, 1976). As leaders, women are more likely to use indirect power, with an emphasis on interpersonal power. Women tend to be less formal leaders and, consequently, are less likely "to shake up the status quo" (Johnson, 1976:101). When involved in political activities, women are more likely to (1) assume a supporting role; (2) take on secondary responsibilities such as door ringing, envelope stuffing, clerical, or journalistic roles; and (3) concentrate on intraparty affairs (Costantini and Craik, 1972; Krauss, 1974).

These differences in style, interests, and attitudes influence women's perceived political efficacy (Johnson, 1976; Krauss, 1974). Women are neither socialized for political competition, nor encouraged to participate in political activities, and, consequently, they are less confident of their political capabilities. Where, as citizens in a rural community, women might feel a sense of civic duty to become active in community endeavors, they lack the confidence and commitment to seek political office.

Campbell et al. (1960) present an explanation reminiscent of Parson's instrumental-expressive role-differentiation thesis in analyzing sex differences in political efficacy. These role distinctions are internalized, and, consequently, men are expected to dominate in spheres of action outside the family parameter (e.g., politics). This expectation is shared by men and women alike and reflected in greater political efficacy for men than for women (Bozeman et al., 1977:59).

CHANGING ROLES OF WOMEN IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

The data to be analyzed in this study were collected in a rural community. The rural community may provide unique circumstances that influence the participation of women in local decision making. For example, Lynn and Flora (1977) found lower levels of female political activity in rural areas. They note the lack of alternative child-care facilities in rural areas and found that women with greater political participation had fewer children.

Rural, traditional communities have been characterized as resistant to change with lower levels of median education, political innovation, and party competition. One would anticipate, therefore, a negative relationship between acceptance of and recognition of women community power actors and the degree of traditionalism or ruralism of the community. Sigelman (1976), upon review of the literature, predicted a negative relationship between female public employment and community traditionalism, but found, to the contrary, a positive relationship on all six measures investigated. Both quantity and quality of female employment were higher in the traditional settings.

Sigelman (1976) proposed four explanations for these "curious findings." First, public employment may lack the attractiveness (e.g., salary differential) of private industry and employment. Public employment in a traditional community may not require as high a level of professionalism. Rural communities have not been subject to the same degree of political reform. And finally, quota conscious affirmative-action employers may have established a female-minority competition for public positions; consequently, female participation is influenced by minority employment patterns.

Although only the female-minority competition explanation received empirical support in the Sigelman study (1976), we feel that these explanations are suggestive for future research focus in the study of women power actors. First of all, the attractiveness of community leadership might be declining in rural communities. The inflationary economic situation may discourage men from participating in time-consuming public roles that are not financially rewarding. In addition, leadership in a small community may have less prestige than in a larger social system; therefore, female leadership would be more likely in small, rural communities (Karnig and Walter, 1976). With the trend toward a more vertical, cosmopolite orientation of community interests (Warren, 1972), men are more likely to be involved in issues and decision making in extra-community settings.

With regard to profesionalism and community decision making, the increase of federal and state funding programs (e.g., revenue sharing, multicounty program development, and bureaucratic regulations) may have

changed the nature of collective community decision making, requiring a professional type of local leadership. When women in the local community possess these skills, they may be in a more competitive stance with men power actors for recognition. Many women in rural settings possess the necessary skills because of their involvement in secondary political roles, their increased education, and occupation and professional training. In Wisconsin, Moyer et al. (1976) found that active women leaders were more likely to have professional and technical occupations, whereas men leaders were managers, officials, and proprietors.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Discussions of the sex-based differentiation in power, politics and decision making have been organized around several theoretical perspectives; specifically, (1) socialization, (2) mobilization, and (3) resources and structural explanations. Socialization and mobilization theories are based on assumptions that social learning experiences and reinforcement patterns have supported the existence of sex-based stereotypes of political roles (Orum et al., 1974; Moyer, Anderson, and Sheffield, 1976). Generally speaking, women have lacked the encouragement to pursue political careers, the role models to pattern behavior after, and the opportunity to develop the necessary leadership skills. Women are not expected to be in authoritative roles because these roles are considered deviant.

Socialization

In the socialization process, women internalize roles and attitudes. The 'good companion' role is an alternative women's role described by

Parsons (1942). As an alternative to the simple, domestic housewife role and the role of a working wife with a full-time career, the good-companion role involves, "the cultivation of serious interests and humanitarian obligations in community welfare situations and the like" (1942:611). This role is most appropriate in relation to feminine issues such as social welfare or education. The reasons offered by Parsons for the emergence of the good-companion role are (1) escape from the drudgery of the housewife role, (2) male occupational roles leave little time for this type of activity, and (3) for the middle-aged woman entering the empty-nest family stage, it provides new avenues for use of surplus time and energy.

What are the implications of the good-companion role as a traditional sex role for women power actors? First, because women historically have been involved in community welfare interests, there is not an absence of role models and therefore less role strain for the women community power actor in contrast to the politician (Lynn and Flora, 1977). As a 'foot in the door' phenomenon, a certain range of activities is considered appropriate for the woman power actor. These traditional activities, then, can be avenues to assuming more responsibility in community issues and eventually to recognized social power in the community.

Also, in regard to personal and social characteristics, it implies that women power actors would be in the empty-nest stage in the family life cycle. As a profile, women power actors would have (1) few children living at home. (2) as primary occupation, the role of housewife, and (3) long-time residence in the community.

Women tend to express more interest in local issues than in state or national issues (Almond and Verba, 1963). Another explanation for the increase of women in powerful roles is the increasing acceptance and concern with what has been traditionally women's issues (i.e., conservation, human rights, child care, welfare) (Bozeman et al., 1977). Surveys of community power that examine these issues are more likely to find women as power actors than surveys examining issues such as business or elective politics. Bozeman et al. (1977) notes tnat, as these 'women's issues' become more salient politically, then women are more acceptable in authoritative roles. It is hypothesized that women power actors will have greater social power in socio-expressive issue areas.

The contemporary American sentiments of equalitarianism, spurred by the democratic ideal and increased education, favor some change in the role of women in public affairs. A neutral and 'safe' arena for this change is in community leadership in those issues most compatible with the traditional gender role (see Krauss, 1974). What began as voluntarism and philanthropic goodwill several decades ago, now is recognized as community leadership.

Mobilization

Not only does women's political behavior (e.g., participation in elected positions) differ from men's behavior, but in addition, women's political attitudes tend to vary significantly from men's attitudes. One such attitude, frequently discussed in the literature on political women, is political efficacy (cf. Githens and Prestage, 1977). Researchers have found that successful political activities, involvement in voluntary

associations, and political efficacy are positively related (Soule and McGrath, 1977; Bozeman et al., 1977; Orum et al., 1974).

Rogers, Bultena and Barb (1975) review two processes (theoretical frameworks) to explain this relationship. The first is a selection model that proposes that certain social and personal characteristics predispose individuals to be active and involved. The other framework, a mobilization model, states that these personal characteristics are relatively unimportant and that, rather, organizational involvement leads to political activity. This framework of mobilization via organizational involvement also posits that "Individuals who belong to associations are more likely to be politically active than nonmembers, irrespective of factors such as their socioeconomic status or felt political efficacy" (Rogers et al., 1975:306).

Rogers et al. (1975) found support for both frameworks; however, the relationship of organization involvement and political activity was the strongest and remained when socioeconomic status and political attitudes were controlled. In regard to the mobilization framework, they found a differential relationship by type of association and level of political participation. Involvement in instrumental groups was more strongly related to political participation than to activity in expressive groups. The relationship also was stronger in groups having high levels of political discussions rather than low levels of political discussion. These authors do not indicate the sex of respondents, nor, in analysis of type of association and political participation, do they control for sex of respondent. Women's organizations, however, tend to be more expressive by type, whereas men's organizations are more instrumental (Lockheed and Hall, 1976; Booth, 1972).

Some explanations for the finding of an independent effect of organizational involvement with political participation include: (1) that membership in voluntary associations create opportunities for new relationships that may draw the individual into public affairs (Rogers et al., 1975), (2) involvement in associations provides personal resources (leadership skills, political savvy, decision making styles) essential for effective political activities (Lynn, 1975), and (3) involvement in associations promotes a sense of satisfaction with participation in political activity (Rogers et al., 1975) and a sense of efficacy (Orum et al., 1974; Bozeman et al., 1977). Besides increased acquaintances who may encourage the individual to take an active public role, many voluntary associations sponsor community projects that would lead to increased public visibility and possibly to involvement in community decision making. Leadership in voluntary associations may provide access to resources (manpower and money) for the individual to use in community-development projects.

Individuals who have attained higher social status (e.g., high income, education, and occupational status) are more likely to belong to more voluntary associations than are those with lower status (Booth, 1972; Flora, 1977:81). These are the same personal characteristics found to discriminate power actors. Therefore, it follows that power actors would have greater involvement in voluntary associations (more memberships and more offices). However, because women's voluntary associations tend to have more expressive objectives with a member orientation (Booth, 1972:188), membership in women's voluntary associations is not an avenue to fuller

political involvement. Women power actors, it is hypothesized, will have fewer membership in voluntary associations.

Resource Theory

Resource and structural theoretical explanations are based on the thesis that, rather than learning experiences, circumstances in one's social environment, such as communication networks, control of funds, and sex-role stereotypes and attitudes, can explain the differing political interests and styles of men and women (Almond and Verda, 1963; Orum et al., 1974: Collins, 1971). Women are not expected to be in authoritative roles because they do not have the access to scarce resources, skills, and opportunities.

Women's disinterest in extra-community political careers is viewed as a consequence of several barriers. First, women may lack the skills and experience (administrative, political, campaign, public speaking) needed for office. A key to political participation and community leadership of women is experience and skills of decision making. In the United States, women generally have experienced some decision making in the school and family arenas. However, the critical variable (see review, Krauss, 1974) may be job-related decision making. Frequently, occupational roles require involvement in community affairs that leads to influence in community decision making. The individual may have access to funds or other resources desired by the community and, consequently, have influence in community decisions regardless of the individual's desire for power. Also, in enacting one's occupational role (e.g., hospital administrator, school superintendent, public health nurse), the individual may

need to generate community support for some activities. Resource theory implies then that women power actors will more likely have professional or technical careers than other women in the community. This hypothesis regarding women power actors' occupations is counter to the hypothesis suggested by the good-companion role model; namely, that women power actors would not have full-time careers outside the home.

Second, women lack the public visibility needed for political recognition. Women are involved in networks of personal and social relationships and communication that focus on domestic concerns; die Kuche, kie Kirche, und die Kinder. In contrast, male spheres of activity center around their occupations, and, consequently, they interact with a diversity of individuals and come in contact with more political issues.

These theories, while suggesting alternative explanations for sex-role differentiation, are not incompatible. Attitudes encouraged by socialization patterns often are reinforced by structural limititions in society. Collins (1971) theorizes that men, by virtue of control of physical violence and the economy, can establish an attitude of women as sexual property and that this results in political differences. Henley and Freeman (1975) argue that this doctrine of covert status inferiority of women is a means of social control. Women have been a minority group deprived of political importance and, consequently, lack power (Hacker, 1951).

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Research findings on community power actors have found that they are not representative of the general community populace (Hunter, 1953; Dahl,

1961; Bohlen et al., 1964; Aiken and Mott, 1970). Unlike the general community, a disproportionate group are businessmen and in professional occupations. They generally have achieved a higher level of education, higher family incomes, more affiliations with voluntary associations, and a longer community residence. In longitudinal rural community studies, Tait et al. (1975) found that, although there was regular turnover in the community power actor pool, the personal and social characteristics of the power actors remained unchanged.

Theorists have failed to agree as to whether women, especially those in politics, have different bases of power, different styles of power, and, in addition, different personal and social characteristics. Moyer et al. (1976) theorized that women power actors would have similar power bases to those of men. They found evidence to support this: (1) active women had more organizational participation, (2) active women were in high occupational levels, and (3) active women were interested and involved in similar issues to those of men. As suggested by a resource theoretical perspective, women and men compete for power and must have the resources to take power.

Other research findings have consistently found that younger, higher-educated, and more affluent individuals were more positive concerning the political potential and equality for women (Bozeman et al., 1977; Krauss, 1974). Generalizing from this finding, theorists have hypothesized that women political leaders would be younger, more highly educated, and more affluent (Karnig and Walter, 1976). It would seem that this group would be more likely to 'buck the system' and become involved in the political arena. Research, however, has failed to support

this hypothesis. Instead, women political leaders are found to be as old (Costantini and Craik, 1972) or older (Stoper, 1977) than male political leaders. It also has been found that women are not as well educated as men power actors (Costantini and Craik, 1972).

How are these negative findings explained? The age similarities of men and women are accounted for by the maturity criteria to be a public figure. Men must prove themselves in business and voluntary associations, the 'training grounds' for young power actors. Women, likewise, must prove themselves. Their internship, we would argue, occurs more in the area of community projects rather than in voluntary associations as for men.

Women's initial entry into political participation, however, often is delayed by another 'maturity' criterion for women, the age of their children. Reference often is made to this criterion as a biological or physiological factor. However, female responsibility for child rearing as related to power actors is a social factor after the initial biological facts of birth and nursing. It has been suggested that sex-based political sociolization is not as great a deterrent to political activity as are child-care responsibilities (Karnig and Walter, 1976). It is not surprising that women political leaders tend to have older children or are not married (Stoper, 1977; Moyer et al., 1976). As suggested by the good-companion role model, women power actors are more likely to have fewer people residing in their homes than are men power actors.

In review of these findings on women in politics and power, the following hypotheses concerning personal and social characteristics were developed for analysis:

(1) Women community power actors will have fewer memberships in voluntary associations than will men power actors.

(2) Women power actors will be as old or older than men power actors.

(3) Women power actors will have lived in the community as long or longer than men power actors.

(4) Women power actors will have as high or higher levels of income and education than men power actors.

Another personal characteristic frequently discussed in the literature on political women is political efficacy. This refers to the "feeling that one's own participation in politics has some effect on the outcome of public policies" (Soule and McGrath, 1977:183). Research has found that political efficacy is positively related to participation and affiliation with voluntary associations, education, and past success in political activities (Soule and McGrath, 1977; Orum et al., 1974).

A similar concept could be developed concerning efficacy and community power actors. It is defined as the feeling that one's own participation in community issues has some effect on the outcome of community decisions. Because women are less likely to hold offices and are more likely to have informal styles of power, it is hypothesized that they would have lower community efficacy.

PROCEDURES

Data were collected in two rural communities; Prairie City (population @ 4,400) and Center Town (population @ 2,000).[3] The first stage of the longitudinal study was in 1962 when data were collected in both communities. In 1973, Prairie City was restudied by using replications of the methods used in 1962.[4] In 1977, Center Town was restudied in the second wave of the longitudinal study. Because a total of only two women were identified as power actors in all communities studied in 1962, analysis will focus on the recent restudies.

The communities chosen for the studies are both rural county seats and the largest communities in their respective counties. As county seats, they are the hub of many county activities in addition to community activities. Both communities have some light industry, but they have not experienced notable economic or industrial growth.

Identifying the Power Actors

The field procedures for identifying the power actors in 1962, 1973, and 1977 involved two phases. An issue-specific reputational approach was used to identify power actors (see Table 1). During the first phase, extensive personal interviews were held with individuals who, although they resided outside the community, were considered knowledgeable of the community.

In 1962, five individuals living outside Prairie City and five living outside Center Town were interviewed. In the restudies, it was no longer necessary to contact only external sources of information because there were sufficient contacts within the communities from the original study. In 1973, seven knowledgeables were interviewed, with two of these knowledgeables living outside Prairie City. In Center Town, eight knowledgeables, five of whom lived outside the community, were interviewed in 1977. In this phase, data collected included lists of persons in the community with broad knowledge of the community decision-making processes, background information on community issues, and a list of community power actors.

In the second phase of identifying power actors, personal interviews were held with community knowledgeables living inside the community whom the Phase 1 knowledgeables had recognized as having a broad knowledge of the decision-making processes. In 1962, 16 knowledgeables were interviewed in Prairie City, and nine knowledgeables were interviewed in Center Town. In 1973, 18 knowledgeables were interviewed in Prairie City. In the Center Town restudy of 1977, 12 were interviewed. Data collected by using a formal field schedule included the names of persons whom the knowledgeables perceived as having the most social power in different issue areas.

For the third phase of interviewing, power actors were contacted. At both times, all community power actors receiving three or more mentions in one issue area were identified as the community power actor pool. The issue areas studied in Prairie City in both studies were industrial development, politics, and general affairs. Those examined longitudinally in Center Town were business and industry, politics, and general affairs. In each restudy, additional issue areas (viz., local government affairs, health, environment, and education) were included. In Prairie City, 26 individuals were identified as power actors, and 25 of these were interviewed in 1962. In 1973, of the 38 power actors identified, 33 were interviewed. In Center Town, all 18 power actors identified were interviewed in 1962. In 1977, all 30 power actors were interviewed. In Phase III, power actors were interviewed with a formal field schedule requesting information on (1) the amount of social power that each of the power actors possessed in specific issue areas, (2) their attitudes concerning community issues and conditions, (3) their involvement in elective offices

and voluntary organizations, and (4) their personal and social characteristics. Table 1 is a summary table of the data-collection methods.

Operational Measures

During the third-phase interviews, each respondent was asked to rate the other power actors in the community power actor pool according to their ability to get things done and the amount of social power they had in different given issue areas. The issue areas explored in 1962 and re-examined were industry, politics, and general affairs. Other issue areas included in the restudies were health, education, and environmental resources. These issue areas were identified as current relevant community issues in interviews with Phase I community knowledgeables. Respondents were to indicate the effectiveness a power actor had in blocking or supporting program approvals in the given issue area. They also were asked to rate themselves on social power in each issue area.

The operational measures of 'social power' consisted of 11-point scales. The respondents were to circle the number (power value) that corresponded to the appropriate amount of social power that they perceived the given power actor to have in relation to community decisions.

A mean (average) power value was calculated for each power actor in each specified issue area by summing the power values assigned to the power actor on the rating scale and dividing by the number of respondents rating that power actor. The respondent's self-rating was not included in this summation. A mean power value was calculated for each power actor for each issue area.

The total power value was determined by the sum of mean (average) power values in business and industry, politics, and general affairs. This total mean power value is the general measure of community social power that each power actor had on the basis of other power actors' perceptions; that is, the individual's reputation for power.

The variables to be examined with the suggested hypotheses are number of memberships in voluntary associations, occupation, number of people living in household, age, income, education, length of residence, and community efficacy. These variables will be operationalized in the following manner.

Number of memberships is the sum total of all current memberships in voluntary association reported by respondent.

Occupation prestige is measured by the North-Hatt Occupational Prestige Scale. Occupation prestige is based on the male head of household's reported occupation. Occupation also was examined by categories developed for this study. In regard to occupation category, the specific power actor's (man or woman) occupation was used.

The number of people living in the household included the respondent and was coded as reported in the interview.

Age is measured as the power actor's actual age as reported.

Income was measured by an unequal-category scale ranging from $3,000 and under to more than $35,000. Because of the longitudinal nature of the analysis, power actors' incomes will be adjusted for inflation based on the Farm Family Living Index (USDA, 1977). All income is reported on the basis of 1967 dollar value.

Education will be measured as the actual number of years of formal education attained by the power actor.

Length of residence in the community (longevity) is measured as number of years reported by the respondent.

Community efficacy has been defined as the feeling that one's own participation in community decisions has some effect on the outcome of these decisions. It is the felt "potential of an individual mobilizing to attempt to influence policy" (Flora, 1977:86).

In each question asking the respondents to rate power actors as to their degree of social power in different issue areas, the power actors also were asked to rate themselves as to the amount of influence that they had in supporting or blocking decisions in each issue area. Community efficacy is operationalized as the self-rating in each issue area.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics are reported in the analysis of the associations suggested by the hypotheses. Because the respondents constitute the population of interest rather than a sample, tests of significance and significance levels will not be included (Morrison and Henkel, 1969). The primary purpose of this study is descriptive. The identification of women as community power actors is a recent occurrence. Very little is known about the characteristics of women who are power actors.

FINDINGS

From 1962 to 1973, the turnover rate in power actors was high. In Prairie City, only eight of the 33 power actors interviewed in 1973 were also interviewed as power actors in 1962. In Center Town, seven individuals were in both the 1962 and 1977 power actor pools. Taking into account the

increased size of the power actor pools, this represents a 66- and 61-percent dropout rate, with an accrual of 76 and 77 percent new power actors in the restudied Prairie City and Center Town pools. In a 6-year longitudinal study of a small rural county in southeastern U.S.A., Nix et al. (1975) found a dropout rate of about 33 percent, with an addition of 40 percent new leaders. Pfautz et al. (1975) reported a complete turnover in a 10-year longitudinal study of the black leadership in Providence, Rhode Island.

A high rate of turnover is expected in longitudinal studies of community power. Retirement is clearly not the only reason for turnover. Other possible explanations for changing power actors are death, bad health, business failure, or personal difficulties. Although this was not a focus of this study, it was found, in Prairie City, that the power actors who were identified in both studies were in 1962 younger on the average (mean of 46.0 years in comparison with 50.8 years for other power actors). In addition, they had, on the average, more memberships and official involvement in voluntary associations and lower total mean power values than others in the 1962 power actor pool.

In general, the high rate of turnover in power actors in rural communities has not been accompanied by changes in personal and social characteristics (Tait et al., 1975; Nix et al., 1975). The mean values for selected personal and social characteristics of the power actor pools in 1962, 1973, and 1977 are presented in Table 2. In general, the selected personal and social characteristics of the power actors were similar at both points (Tait et al., 1975). Notable tendencies found in both communities included

an increased number of memberships in voluntary associations, a trend toward a more Democratic, as opposed to Republican, orientation, and a shorter length of residence in the community.

Another change, not noted in the table, was the increased number of women in the power actor pools. From 1962 to 1973 and 1977, the proportion of women in the community power actor pools increased by 16.2 and 26.7 percent. In 1973, in Prairie City, eight women were identified as power actors compared with two women identified in 1962. Although women occasionally have been identified as community power actors, community leadership has been considered, by and large, a male domain (Moyer et al., 1976; Krauss, 1974; Bell et al., 1961). The identification of women as comprising 23.6% and 26.7% of the 1973 and 1977 community power actor pool is a noteworthy finding. In Prairie City, both women identified in 1962 also were identified and interviewed as power actors in 1973.

Examination of data in Table 3 reveals that these women power actors have some personal and social characteristics similar to those of the men power actors. The average number of years of education is similar for both communities. In Center Town, all power actors had at least a high school education, and one woman power actor and 10 men power actors had post-graduate education. This finding supports the hypothesis of equivalent education for men and women power actors.

In both communities, the mean age of all power actors is between 45 and 55 years old. In Prairie City, the women power actors were, on the average, older than their male counterparts, and in Center Town, the women power actors tended to be younger. These findings therefore fail to support the

hypothesis that women power actors would be as old or older than men power actors.

The findings regarding length of residence also were inconclusive. In Prairie City, the women power actors had greater longevity, whereas, in Center Town, they had less longevity than the men power actors. However, it can be concluded that power actors, both male and female, had resided in their community for most of their adult years.

In both communities, all women power actors were married. In Prairie City, one woman power actor was married to another power actor. In Center Town, four women power actors were married to men power actors.

The average family income of the women power actors was less than that of men power actors in both communities. Note, in conjunction with this income differential, the differences in category of occupation for these groups (see Table 4). In Center Town, most women (75%) were combining the traditional roles of wife and mother with a career outside the home. In contrast in Prairie City, the majority (87.5%) of the women power actors were homemakers or retired. Their education levels were similar.

Men power actors were concentrated in the occupation categories of business (55.3%), agriculture (12.8%), and education (10.7%). The employed women power actors in Center Town were primarily in professional and technical roles (50%). These findings support our hypothesis of different occupations for men and women and, consequently, access to different information and social networks.

Further analysis of the personal and social characteristics led to the identification of two profiles of women as rural community power actors. In Prairie City, the women power actors were similar to the good-companion

female role model suggested by Parsons (1942). The majority indicated their occupation as housewife and were not employed outside the home. These women were, on the average, older than the women in the other community and men power actors. Also, the lower number of people residing in the home indicates that they were in or entering an empty-nest stage in family living.

In Center Town, the characteristics of women power actors were consistent with those suggested by the resource model. The majority of the Center Town women power actors were employed outside the home. They tended to be in professional and technical careers that would allow greater access to resources such as decision-making and leadership skills. This occupational participation also provides the Center Town women power actors with access to additional communication and information networks. The 'resource model' power actors tended to be younger than the Prairie City women power actors and had more people residing in their homes, which suggests that they were not in the empty-nest stage.

As was hypothesized, in both communities, men power actors held significantly more memberships in voluntary associations than did women power actors. The relationships of voluntary associations and political activity suggested by mobilization theory therefore seems more applicable to men power actors.

Two patterns are suggested by the data on issue area and social power and community efficacy (see Table 5). First, in regard to social power and issue area, the men power actors tended to have similar mean power values on all issue areas. Their mean power values were slightly lower on socio-expressive issues, but the difference does not seem significant. The

women power actors in Prairie City also were similar in mean power values on all issue areas. However, in Center Town, the women power actors did tend to have differential mean power value by issue area, with higher mean power values in socio-expressive issues.

In regard to community efficacy and issue area, there seems to be an interaction effect by sex of power actor. That is, men power actors tended to overrate, in relation to the rating by all other power actors, their power in instrumental issue areas (general affairs, business, and politics). Women power actors, however, tended to underrate, in relation to the ratings by all other power actors, their power in instrumental issue areas. In socio-expressive issues (health and education), women power actors tended to overrate their power, whereas men rated themselves about the same as the ratings by all power actors. In summary, women power actors had lower community efficacy than men power actors, and the difference in efficacy scores of men and women was greater in regard to instrumental issues. A general conclusion, based on these findings, is that a sex-typing of issues is perceived by actors in community decision making.

CONCLUSION

It is important in a democratic system to recognize and remove barriers to women's participation in community decision making and value allocation so as to actualize women's potential. Successful community social action is contingent on the identification of resources. Planned community action may be unsuccessful if change agents, in developing strategies, fail to consider all community power actors. This includes identifying the women power actors.

Women have traditionally accepted politics and civic leadership as a man's domain. Yet there seems to be a breakthrough in the contemporary rural setting that allows the recognition of women power actors. This paper examined these influential women's characteristics and roles in the community.

Two profiles of women power actors emerged, the good-companion model and the resource model. This finding of different profiles of personal and social characteristics reinforces earlier appeals for comparative community power studies (Clark, 1968; Friedman, 1970). Future research on the topic of women power actors might explore their identification in relation to community characteristics such as political reform, minority population composition, centralization, and degree of industrialization.

ENDNOTES

[1] Most interview questions in community studies are asexual in reference. Examples of 'male' reference include,

> "Do you believe that there is one group of men who wield most of the influence in community affairs?" (Thometz, 1963:115),
>
> and
>
> "Suppose a man wanted to become a leader in this community. Could you give me your ideas about what he would have to do and the qualifications he would need?" (Presthus, 1964:451).

No instance of 'female' reference in questions is known by this author.

[2] We are not suggesting that social scientists have intentionally biased their data so as to find a male-dominated power structure. Rather, we are suggesting that the assumption of the 'thereness' of women and natural superiority of men is so pervasive as to have penetrated research methodology.

[3] To insure confidentiality of respondents, pseudonyms are used for communities and individuals.

[4] The original analysis was conducted at Iowa State University in 1962. To adopt a longitudinal design, the conceptual framework and procedures for data collection used in the 1962 data study were replicated in the 1973 and 1977 studies. For discussions and findings from the first study, see Bohlen et al., 1967.

TABLE 1: Summary of Methods for Identifying Power Actors

		1962	Prairie City 1973	Center Town 1977
Phase 1				
External knowledgeables interviewed				
	Prairie City	5	7	
	Center Town	5		8
Phase 2				
Internal knowledgeables interviewed				
	Prairie City	16	18	
	Center Town	9		12
Persons receiving 3 or more mentions as power actors				
	Prairie City	26	38	
	Center Town	18		30
Phase 3				
Power Actors Interviewed				
Male	Prairie City	23	25	
	Center Town	18		22
Female	Prairie City	2	8	
	Center Town	0		8
Power Actors Interviewed at Both Times			8	7

TABLE 2: Selected Personal & Social Characteristics
Longitudinal Review

Mean Values of Characteristics	Prairie City		Center Town	
	1962 (N=25)	1977 (N=33)	1962 (N=18)	1977 (N=30)
Age	50.8 yrs.	49.6 yrs.	46.5 yrs.	51.6 yrs.
Education	14.3 yrs.	14.9 yrs.	14.8 yrs.	15.8 yrs.
Income	$15,986	$15,641	$17,651	$14,288
Length of Residence				
Community	31.1	27.5	35.6	28.9
State	41.2	45.3	45.3	45.5
Political Orientation*	2.4	3.3	2.9	4.3
Memberships in Voluntary Assoc.	11.3	12.0	6.83	9.33
Total Mean Power Value in Business, Politics, and General Affairs	24.361	18.364	19.126	18.973
Occupational Prestige	77.04	76.82	78.39	78.23

* Political orientation was measured on a nine-point continuum from 1) conservative Republican to 9) liberal Democrat.

TABLE 3: Characteristics of Power Actors

Mean Values of Characteristics	Prairie City		Center Town	
	Men (N=25)	Women (N=8)	Men (N=22)	Women (N=8)
Age	48	54.6	53.5	46.5
Length of Residence				
Community	25	35.2	30.9	23.4
State	44	49.4	47.6	39.5
Education	14.9	14.8	16.1	15.0
Income	$15,641	$14,538	$15,368	$14,183
Political Orientation	3.1	3.9	4.4	4.3
Memberships in Voluntary Assoc.	11.04	6.875	10.05	7.375
People in Household	3.48	2.875	3.318	3.875
Occupation Prestige	77.12	75.875	78.09	78.875

TABLE 4: Occupation Categories of Power Actors

Frequencies in each category	Prairie City - 1973 Men (25)	Prairie City - 1973 Women (8)	Center Town - 1977 Men (22)	Center Town - 1977 Women (8)
Professional and Technical	2	0	4	4
Business	13	0	13	1
Education	3	1	2	1
Agriculture	5	0	1	0
Communication	2	0	0	0
Homemaker	0	5	0	2
Retired	0	2	2	0

TABLE 5: Social Power and Community Efficacy

Issue Area	Mean Power Values				Mean Efficacy Scores			
	Prairie City		Center Town		Prairie City		Center Town	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
General Affairs	6.16	5.95	6.76	5.80	7.58	6.87	7.11	5.75
Business and Industry	6.09	5.94	6.41	4.57	7.42	3.00	7.22	3.75
Politics and Government	6.26	5.99	6.60	5.12	7.50	7.50	7.39	5.50
Environment			6.40	5.30			7.06	5.62
Health	5.95	5.73	6.35	7.10	6.15	5.25	6.58	8.00
Education	5.97	5.67	6.72	6.54	7.09	6.88	6.64	8.25
	(N=25)	(N=8)	(N=22)	(N=8)				

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